

## FIELD BROME

*Bromus arvensis* L.

plant symbol = BRAR5

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Plant Materials Program

### Uses

Field brome is used primarily as a winter cover crop on vegetable lands and in orchards in the Northeast. Due to its heavy root growth and low, dense top growth, it gives good protection against wind and water erosion. The heavy root growth makes it a useful green manure crop. When used as a cover plant, it provides good pasturage for Canada geese, especially in the spring.

### Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

### Weediness

This plant may become weedy or invasive in some regions or habitats and may displace desirable vegetation if not properly managed. Please consult with your local NRCS Field Office, Cooperative Extension Service office, or state natural resource or agriculture department regarding its status and use. Weed information is also available from the PLANTS Web site at [plants.usda.gov](http://plants.usda.gov).

### Description

Field brome is a winter annual. It produces dense, low leafy growth in the fall. Spring growth starts earlier than most other annual grasses used for cover crops. It does not have creeping stolons or rhizomes, but tillers profusely. It produces seedheads in late spring or early summer. Seed stalks are 2 to 3 feet tall. The principal characteristics that make it an outstanding cover crop are the extensive fibrous root system and the relatively short top growth. It is winter hardy in northeast and north central regions. It grows vigorously under high fertility and often smothers other grasses or weeds. It is an excellent seed producer and can maintain itself as a reseeding annual. There are 250,000 seeds per pound.

### Adaptation

Field brome does best on medium textured soils that are moderately well-drained to well-drained. It has done

well in lowlands subject to flooding and on sloping, gravelly soils. The most suitable pH range is between 6.0 and 7.0.

Field brome can be found throughout the United States. For a current distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Website.

### Establishment

The best seeding date for field brome is mid-August in the North to early September in the South. When used as a cover crop in cropland, field brome is usually seeded at the time of the last cultivation. Field brome should be seeded for orchard cover on a firm seedbed. Seeding rate is 10 pounds per acre. Rolling, cultipacking, or cultivating after broadcast seeding is essential for a uniform stand. Field brome is a heavy user of nitrogen and best growth is produced when nitrogen is available. The light, fluffy seed of field brome may cause some planting difficulties. The seed is best applied using a power driven cyclone type seeder with an agitator. A cultipacker seeder or a grain drill with a positive type feed may be used for planting.

### Management

Nitrogen application is not essential for cover crop use, but supplemental nitrogen may be added to increase growth and to speed up breakdown of the heavy sod after plowing. Without adequate nitrogen the succeeding crop, particularly vegetables, may show nitrogen deficiency. This grass can be heavily grazed in late fall and again in the spring for 6 to 8 weeks.

When managed as a reseeding annual in orchards, the stand should be disked in the spring before seedheads are produced, leaving only 10 percent of the stand to produce seed. This will provide ample seed to re-establish the stand the following fall. After seed maturity, the entire stand can be disked under.

### Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

'Svalof's Sleipner' is the only released variety of field brome grass. Most seed produced in this country can be traced to this variety.

### Control

Please contact your local agricultural extension specialist or county weed specialist to learn what works best in your area and how to use it safely. Always read label and safety instructions for each control method. Trade names and control measures appear in this document only to provide specific information. USDA, NRCS does not guarantee or warranty the products and control

methods named, and other products may be equally effective.

**Prepared By & Species Coordinator:**  
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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS <<http://plants.usda.gov>> and Plant Materials Program Web sites <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>.

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